

Year C - Fourth Sunday of Lent

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

'Your brother here was dead and has come to life.'



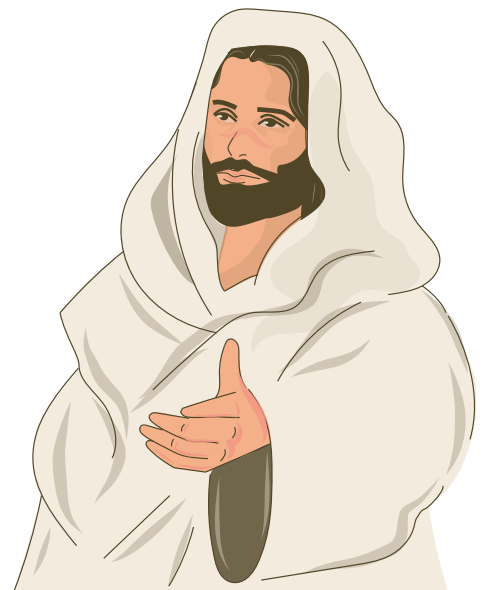
Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this story: "Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, 'Give me my share of the property.' So the father divided his property between his two sons. Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, 'My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will leave and go to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him. The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son.'

But his father said to the servants, 'Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found.' And they began to celebrate.



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The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, 'What's going on here?' The servant answered, 'Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf.'

The older brother got so mad that he would not even go into the house. His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, 'For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on bad women. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast.'

His father replied, 'My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found.' "



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You are always loved



- Introduction**
- *You will need a cash note for this introduction - a \$10, \$20 or \$50 note (don't worry you won't be spending it, it is just for an example).*
 - Hold up the cash note and ask who wants it? It's likely everyone will be jumping up or hands in the air, they will all want it. Scrunch up the cash into a ball and ask "Who wants it now?" They'll probably all still want it.
 - Keep scrunching it, stamping on it and each time ask "Who wants it?" They will still want it.
 - Explain to the children that it doesn't matter that it's been scrunched, smashed or crumpled the money doesn't lose its worth.

Message

- It's the same meaning behind the story of the prodigal son. The son who leaves and spends all his money is left with nothing, even the pigs are better cared for than him!
- He thinks he has lost everything and lost his place - but maybe, if he goes back to his father's house he could be a servant and at least have some food and shelter.
- But when he returns to his father's house, he is embraced. His father loves him and no matter what has happened to him, he will always be loved. Like the cash note that is crumpled and scrunched, it never lost its worth and neither has the son. It's important that we remember that no matter what happens to us or what we do, we will always be loved.
- Other times, we might feel like the older brother. The one who has always been doing the right thing but feels like he has been overlooked. It can be hard when someone else is celebrated and we feel like we aren't. But as the father said, they thought the younger son was lost and gone forever but now he has returned.
- The great things that happen to others, don't take away from the good things in our life. The older son, who had always been close to the father and always known his love should know that would never change, his father would always love him.
- Jesus told us this story to tell us about God's love. God is the Father and we are the children who will always be loved and will always have a place in the Father's house.

Discussion

- Who is the father in the story?
- Have you ever felt like one of the sons?
- What do you think is the meaning of this story?

